



EMERALD PEOPLE'S UTILITY DISTRICT

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William Jefferson Clinton
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

May 9, 1999

Mr. President,

The Board of Directors of Emerald People's Utility District requests that your Administration act with diligence, determination and dispatch to reverse the decline and imminent extinction of the Columbia and Snake River salmon and steelhead populations. Based on the best scientific and commercial data available, and respecting the lowest long-term economic implications, we support removal of the earthen portions of the Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose and the Lower Granite Dams on the Lower Snake River.

Emerald People's Utility District (EPUD) is a consumer owned electric utility serving a rural population of approximately 35,000 people and a variety of commercial businesses and industrial customers in Oregon's Willamette Valley. We purchase approximately 75 percent of our electrical energy from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). EPUD is in the top 25 percent by volume of BPA's customers. It is our strong desire to see BPA remain a viable provider of electrical energy and transmission services into the 21st Century. Through their retail electric rates, citizens throughout the Pacific Northwest have been paying for the hydroelectric facilities on the Columbia and Snake River system. We are concerned that should the US Government, and specifically the US Department of Energy (BPA), fail to take steps necessary to protect the biological integrity of the Columbia and Snake Rivers, the benefits that BPA has afforded the people of the Pacific Northwest will be taken away.

Since the inception of the Bonneville Power Administration, by then President Franklin Roosevelt, there has been a constant threat from members of Congress representing Districts outside the region to force the public to buy electricity from BPA at prices above the actual cost of producing and delivering that electricity. Cost based power rates are a central component of the economic foundation of the Pacific Northwest.

If Northwest salmon populations become extinct, the citizens of this country will lose a piece of our natural heritage and all that is inherent in this priceless resource. And, BPA will have failed to honor its public trust obligations. The ramifications of this failure will result in violations of treaties with Northwest Indian tribes and with Canada (Pacific Salmon Treaty). The cost to the taxpayer for these violations will be enormous. We can not expect the citizens of the Pacific Northwest to continue to enjoy power rates that in some cases are 40 percent lower than the rest of the nation while the taxpayers pick up the tab for our lack of vision and commitment to saving salmon.

In addition to Canadian and Tribal treaty rights, there are a host of federal laws that mandate restoration of these fish populations. The Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act and the Northwest Power Planning and Conservation Act all set forth responsibilities for protecting the habitat and survivability of these fish populations.



MAKING CONSERVATION COMFORTABLE

The Board of Directors of EPUD has a vested interest in assuring that the electric generating capacity that is lost as a result of returning this 150 mile stretch of the Lower Snake River to a free flowing river is replaced with clean renewable generating resources and with cost effective energy conservation measures. Relying on findings in the Northwest Power Planning Council's 1998 Northwest Power Plan, and on information available from the Renewable Northwest Project regarding availability and cost of new renewable resources, we are confident that a clean and cost competitive alternative is available to replace the power output of the four dams.

We are well aware of the hardship that the decision to bypass the four Lower Snake River Dams will have on some interests in the region. There are 13 corporate farms that draw irrigation water for 37,000 acres from one of the reservoirs. There is a commercial barge company that operates as a monopoly in this section of the river. There is also an industrial manufacturing operation that relies on the reservoir behind one of the dams as a pool to dilute the toxic discharges from its manufacturing process. We believe there are reasonable economic solutions to each of these interest's needs.

Following our review of alternatives to bypassing the four Snake River dams that would have a reasonable probability of restoring salmon populations at greater than museum levels, it became clear that all other alternatives would have much more dramatic effects on people and communities than does the bypass option. All other options pose enormous costs on taxpayers and rate payers. Alternatives that would return fish populations that can sustain a commercial and sport fishery would take hundreds of thousands of irrigated lands out of production. We do not find these draconian impacts to be acceptable or necessary.

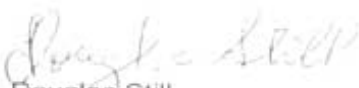
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It is the position of the Board of Directors of Emerald People's Utility District that the extinction of salmon is not an option. We believe that removing the earthen portion of the four Lower Snake River Dams is in fact the least expensive alternative that offers the highest probability of returning healthy salmon populations to the rivers of the Pacific Northwest.

Clearly there are a variety of problems facing anadromous fish populations on the West Coast of the United States. Where there are actions that can be taken that have a high probability of success for restoring these fish, we must implement them now. Where other impacts exist for which there is not reasonable scientific data available, we must commit to study these issues and seek measures to mitigate the impacts.

President Clinton, we call on your administration and members of Congress not to allow this great nation to cross the threshold of the 21st Century on the backs of extinct salmon.

Respectfully,


Douglas Still
President of the Board


Jeff Shields
General Manager

cc: Vice President Al Gore
Northwest Congressional Delegation